

Shocking hidden lessons at St Bride's school...

by Diane Chanteau

A "JOLLY hockeysticks" school, which opens today for adult women who want to pretend to be children, has another more disturbing side.

The group of British women who run St Bride's School in Burtonport, Co Donegal, a tiny Irish fishing village have admitted running a series of 'special' courses where the 'pupils' are whipped, birched and caned.

The women, who call themselves the Silver Sisterhood, a group of Matriarchalists, have courted Press and television publicity to attract English and American women particularly to their holiday school which they have invited the local mayor and school ceildh band to open.

The image they project for the £95 a week courses is "fun, innocence and childhood," where women who want to put aside their adult "masks" can dress up in old-fashioned uniforms, do lessons in a schoolroom with authentic desks and slates, sleep in dormitories and be treated as children.

During a mock-up of a day in the life of St Bride's last week, when local women, who do not know about the other courses dressed up for pictures, was found a list of punishments ranging from whipping to after-class caning and severe punishment.

There were also four 'record sheets' in exercise books marked St Bride's kept by the 'pupils' during the autumn term which showed the punishments given each



Headmistress Miss Dachcolwyn—school offers a lot of fun.

day for various minor misdemeanours.

On one day alone a woman underwent:

- Whipping, for putting her pencils in the wrong order;
- Birching and lines, for putting her leg forward when curtsying;
- 11 strokes of the birch, for a mistake in lines;
- Four strokes, and later, three strokes of the cane for continuing to put her leg forward while curtsying;

● One stroke of the cane for mislaying her bonnet.

All the women who underwent the 'special' courses which preceded the official St Bride's pilot courses last summer and continued throughout autumn and Christmas were British.

The schools "head mistress" is Brighe Dachcolwyn, formerly Mary Scarlett, a primary schoolteacher, who used to teach at a school.

It was also discovered her

name in the first issue of Artemis—styled "a magazine for women who love women"—where she wrote an article about Gay Liberation.

Before we discovered the evidence of the other courses, Miss Dachcolwyn said: "St Bride's is run on the lines of a traditional girls' boarding school with old-fashioned mistresses. It does offer a complete break and it's a lot of fun."

"We decided that corporal punishment would not be

used, we thought it was too controversial."

When Miss Dachcolwyn was asked to explain the lists of corporal punishments and the punishment record sheets, she said: "I don't know what you're talking about. This is nonsense."

"It must be a joke of the girls. The truth about the course is there is no corporal punishment."

She added: "My real name is in a lesbian magazine because I was approached to write something about my experience when I was working with Gay Liberation. My only contact with the magazine was that one article and an interview I gave them about the school."

The Course Administrator at St Bride's is Deborah McBride MA, who was researching a doctorate at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, when she became involved with the Matriarchal movement.

She admitted the punishments were genuine when we asked and said: "You must understand that these were special courses and nothing to do with St Bride's School as it will be when we open."

"We have been doing experiments in this area for some time. The alternative school is similar to St Bride's but deeper and more serious, and it involves corporal punishment."

"I suppose we've been pretty green," she said. "The special courses will be called by a differently named school from now on and they don't run at the same time as St Bride's."

Planners relent in gun siege case

THE MAN facing trial accused of using a shotgun to hold 29 councillors and six of their officials hostage was yesterday granted the planning permission that he was refused on the night of the siege.

Cornwall's Caradon district council planning committee lifted the restrictions which had prevented Terence Rafferty (54) and his wife Elsie (52) selling two houses.

When the committee rejected the couple's first application for the lifting of the conditions last July Mr Rafferty was among the public in the council chamber at Liskeard.

An hour later a man with a shotgun entered the council chamber and the siege began. Yesterday, the planners,

meeting in the same chamber, voted by 13-11 to lift the conditions they imposed when the Raffertys first won planning permission in 1975 to build the houses at Polbathic, Cornwall.

These restricted their occupation to that by people engaged in the management of a nearby hotel which the Raffertys then owned.

The couple later sold the hotel but the buyer did not want the houses. Because of the "hotel use" restriction they were virtually unsaleable until yesterday's decision.

Mr Rafferty, who is now on bail, is also accused of having a shotgun with intent to endanger life and threatening to kill Caradon planning officer Jack Harcombe and others.

Soccer fracas murder charge

AN ENTIRE Brazilian soccer team was taken into police custody and at least two team members will be charged with murder after an end-of-match melee in which a fan died.

Fans of the local team Remo in the northern city of Belem stormed on to the pitch

at the end of a match drawn 0-0 on Sunday against Uberlandia, who were celebrating promotion to the first division.

According to police, two Uberlandia players kicked a Remo fan who then had a heart attack and died.

'Giant' avoids jail

A BRICKLAYER known as the gentle giant, who attacked a nine-months pregnant woman, escaped jail yesterday.

Steven Hoyle (31), six foot four inches tall, admitted assaulting the woman, her mother-in-law and a police constable.

He was fined £1,000 by Poole magistrates in Dorset and sentenced to six months' imprisonment, suspended for two years.

The court heard that Hoyle, who had previous convictions for unlawful wounding and criminal damage, took exception to the way he was looked at through a shop window.

Hoyle went into the shop, grabbed Mrs Mary Butler (18), shook her violently and shouted abuse, said Inspector Michael Headley, prosecuting.

Hoyle, who was married on Friday, head-butted her husband, hit her mother-in-law Mrs Christine Butler who owns the shop and attacked PC Roderick Harvey.

The attacks, on March 3, were the result of a lethal mixture of drinks said Mr Michael Skinner defending.

Lover battered baby to death

A 22-YEAR-OLD unemployed man was jailed for life yesterday for the murder of his live-in lover's 14-month-old son.

Christopher Brophy killed little David Thompson by battering his head against a hard object and shaking him violently, said Mr Barry Mortimer, QC, prosecuting at Leeds Crown Court.

David, son of Brophy's girlfriend, Christine Dawson, suffered a fractured skull just before he died.

Mr Mortimer said doctors found 36 bruises and marks on his body, including two on the sole of his foot which were made with a cigarette end.

He said David died as a result of "a persistent attack which silenced the child into unconsciousness and death."

Brophy and 20-year-old Christine had been experimenting with cannabis at their home in Brighouse, near Halifax, Mr Mortimer added.

Brophy was found guilty of murdering the child, causing him grievous bodily harm, and cruelty. He had pleaded not guilty.

He claimed the child sustained his injuries by falling down. Brophy, who said he did not work because he was "fed up" with it, said he had not meant to harm David seriously.

Razor blades swallowed by protest convicts

TEN of the Irish Republic's toughest convicts yesterday used razor blades to injure themselves in Limerick Jail.

Some tried to swallow the blades, said reports.

The incident, during an exercise period, was part of a protest by 12 men recently transferred from Dublin's Mountjoy Prison for security reasons.

An Irish government

spokesman said all the men were high-risk prisoners, including murderers, drug dealers and armed robbers—but no terrorists.

There were apparently no serious injuries and all the prisoners received medical treatment last night.

Another of the dozen protestors was said to have begun a hunger strike earlier yesterday.

CRITICS

GLENDIA JACKSON
THEATRE
Carolyn Fleming

A slick show at Wirral's Grease

WIRRAL Youth Theatre's production of Grease gets under way with a somewhat whimsical disc jockey (Mark Lunt) playing suitably raucous hits.

This rather shaky opening at a high school reunion soon gave way to more energetic performances from the cast, and Grease, directed by Mary Austin, really lifts off with the well staged number Summer Nights.

The singing is not as powerful as it might be, but this scene between young lovers Sandy and Danny really pulls at the heart strings.

Sandy, played by Annabel Knight, is convincing and honest throughout, without falling into the trap of being over-sugary.

Dave Barnes as Danny puts in a slick performance as the young blood torn between his macho teenage gang and the ties of going steady.

Although it loses momentum in places, Grease has some memorably vibrant scenes.

Particularly lively were the Burger Palace Boys in Greased Lightning. They moved, on the whole, with more dynamism than the beat-up car they danced upon!

The best of their Pink Ladies was undoubtedly Frenchy, whose boudy mannerisms almost stole the show. She had formidable opposition, though, from Gill Affleck's Rizzo.

Singing Look At Me I'm Sandra Dee, her overt but youthful imitation of sexuality made a neat counterpoint to Sandy's naive charm.

Largely missing the beautifully paced humour of the original, this production could nonetheless rise to the occasion with the big dance scenes.

Born To Hand Jive was especially well-performed as an ensemble. The choreography by Sue Ewart Dean achieved both freshness and sophistication.

Lirpa had them all fooled

LIRPA LOOF, the tubby three-foot high furry creature featured on Esther Rantzen's That's Life programme on BBC television on Sunday, yesterday became a favourite with animal lovers.

Thousands at once fell in love with the cheery dark brown animal with the whiskered muzzle—and failed to notice that its name was April Fool spelt backwards.

Meanwhile, the zoo had been inundated with phone calls which have also gone to the Natural History Museum from as far away as Shetland, Liverpool and Bath.

Esther has promised to reveal "how it was done" in next Sunday's That's Life programme.